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Public Health Bytes

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PANDEMIC ALERT PHASE: 3

Communicable Diseases Update: Influenza Update - – Sentinel provider surveillance in Virginia has indicated an increase in reported influenza-like illness (ILI) activity levels during January. Current state influenza activity levels are at the “Regional” level, indicating an increase in ILI in greater than 2 regions. Since the beginning of the influenza season, out of 16 cases of influenza confirmed by the state laboratory, the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) found 15 isolates to be influenza A/H3 and 1 was influenza A/H1. **High level of Adamantane resistance reported:** The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided interim recommendations on January 14, recommending against the use of amantadine and rimantadine for the treatment and prophylaxis of influenza during the current influenza season. During the previous 3 years, Adamantane resistant influenza viruses increased from 1.9% to 12.3%. In the current influenza season, out of 120 influenza A (H3N2) viruses isolated from patients in the U.S., 109 of the isolates (91%) showed resistance to amantadine and rimantadine. Currently the CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for treatment or prophylaxis of influenza. Additional information can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/han011406.htm>. **Influenza and Norovirus Confirmed in Henrico County Long Term Care Facilities (LTCFs):** During the current winter season, Henrico Health District has investigated three gastrointestinal and one respiratory outbreak at LTCFs in the county. Laboratory results provided by the state laboratory, DCLS, revealed the presence of norovirus at 2 LTCF’s and influenza at 1 LTCF. During influenza season, any increase in respiratory disease in a LTCF should be considered influenza until ruled out, especially with symptoms including fever and/or cough and illness causing an increase in the rate of hospitalization and/or death. LTCFs should contact Henrico Health District at (804) 501-4522 to report any suspected respiratory, gastrointestinal or other outbreaks as soon as possible. The health department will provide assistance in attempting to identify the cause of illness and consultation to limit the spread of illness at your facilities.

Environmental Health: A recent US EPA request through the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services highlighted the need for better data on pesticide exposure and illness among workers who use pesticides and those who work in pesticide-treated fields. Henrico Health Department has been asked to remind physicians to report any patient evaluated and/or treated for pesticide exposure or illness. Virginia disease reporting regulations include “toxic substance-related illness” on the list of reportable conditions.

Emergency Preparedness Update: Medical Reserve Corps (MRC): The Henrico MRC began a membership recruitment drive in early January and the membership level has since surged from 20 to over 100 volunteers. To join the Henrico MRC go online to <http://www.co.henrico.va.us/health/mrc.htm> and click on the “Join the Henrico MRC” link. An orientation session will be held on Feb. 16th at 7:00 pm at the Henrico County Human Services Building (8600 Dixon Powers Drive, Richmond, VA 23228). To RSVP for this session, send an e-mail to HenricoMRC@vdh.virginia.gov or call 501-7250.

Prevention updates: Attention Child Health Care Providers! Preschool recruitment/registration for Henrico County Public Schools LEAP programs (Head Start, Title I and VA Preschool Initiative) is underway. Please be advised that children ages 3-4 are eligible and require a **fully** completed School Entrance Health form. Please be advised that the following are required as outlined on the back of the School Entrance Health Form: Height/weight/blood pressure, hemoglobin and/or hematocrit test with result, urine dipstick test with result, vision/hearing screening, lead screening with result, TB screening assessment with result if tested, up to date immunizations, signature and date by medical provider (Please ensure you put the date of the physical exam). If test results are not available the day of the visit, please put the date the test was performed, to document that the test is pending. If you are unable to perform a test (such as hearing/vision) or feel the test is not applicable please state such on the form. For questions, call Federal Programs @ 652-3788 or Head Start @ 343-6555.

Save the Date(s)! 1) Immunization Updates: The Henrico Health Department, 8600 Dixon Powers Drive, will be a downlink location for the series of 4 CDC satellite broadcasts: February 9, 16, 23 and March 2, 2006 on the Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases. See details at: <http://www.phppo.cdc.gov/PHTN/calendar.asp#Feb06>. Please contact Seth Levine, 501-5216 if interested. **2) Preventing Colorectal Cancer in Virginia: A Dialogue for Action** will take place Wednesday April 26, 2006 at the Boar’s Head Inn, Charlottesville, Virginia. For more information contact Theresa Teekah at 804-864-7879 or Theresa.teekah@vdh.virginia.gov **3) Disaster Management Seminar** – Sponsored by the Jewish Community Federation of Richmond will be held in Israel on May 7-14. See details at: http://www.jewishrichmond.org/section_display.html?ID=147

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